CLAIMS



1. A method of notifying a user of the receipt of an e-mail by a mail centre, comprising transmitting a notification message in a broadcast signal.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the notification message is sent without any (direct) user prompt.

3. A method according to claim 1 or 2 wherein the notification message includes an identifier of a receiver/decoder to which the notification message is to be sent.

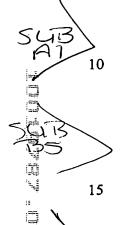
4. A method according to claim 3 wherein the receiver/decoder compares the identifier with an identifier which is stored at the receiver/decoder.

5. A method according to claim 3 or 4 wherein the receiver/decoder has a smartcard number and the identifier comprises at least part of the smartcard number.

6. A method according to any of the preceding claims further comprising storing information relating to e-mail accounts, preferably at a central location.

7. A method according to claim 6 wherein information relating to e-mail accounts is linked to identifiers of receiver/decoders, and preferably wherein the information relating to e-mail accounts is linked to the smartcard numbers of receiver/decoders.

- 8. A method/according to claim 6 or 7 wherein the broadcast signal is part of a subscription service and information relating to e-mail accounts is linked to information relating to the subscription service.
- 9. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the notification message comprises an identifier of the recipient of the e-mail.



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10. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the notification message comprises an identifier of the sender of the e-mail.



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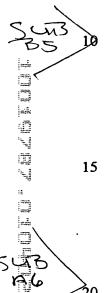
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- 11. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the notification message comprises at least part of the text of the e-mail.
- 12. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the notification message is sent to a receiver/decoder.
- 13. A method according to claim 12 wherein the receiver/decoder generates a signal for indicating to the user receipt of the e-mail by the mail centre.
- 14. A method according to any of the preceding claims further comprising storing preferences selected by the user.
- 15. A method according to any of the preceding claims further comprising notifying the user of a selected number of e-mails.
- 16. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the 20 broadcast signal is a digital data stream.
 - 17. A method according to claim 16 wherein the notification message is sent as a section of the digital data stream.
 - 18. A method according to claim 16 wherein the notification message is sent by way of an entitlement management message.
- 19. A method of notifying a user of the receipt of e-mail by a mail centre, which e-mail is to be transmitted to the user via a first medium, comprising transmitting a notification message, indicating the receipt of e-mail by the mail centre, to the user via a second medium, different from the first medium.
 - 20. A method according to claim 19 wherein the first medium is a switched



medium and the second medium is a broadcast medium.

- A method according to any of the preceding claims further comprising 21. transmitting at least part of the e-mail in the broadcast signal.
- A method of transferring an e-mail from a mail centre to a user, 22. comprising transmitting at least part of the e-mail in a broadcast signal.
- A method of communicating with a mail centre, comprising running an 23. e-mail application on a receiver/decoder.
- Apparatus for notifying a user of the receipt of e-mail by a mail centre, 24. comprising means for transmitting a notification message in a broadcast signal.
- Apparatus according to claim 24 wherein the notification message 25. includes an identifier of a receiver/decoder to which the notification message is to be sent.
- Apparatus according to claims 24 or 25 further comprising means for 26. storing information relating to e-mail accounts.
- Apparatus according to claim 26 wherein information relating to e-mail 27. accounts is linked to identifiers of receiver/decoders, and preferably wherein the information relating to e-mail accounts is linked to the smartcard numbers of receiver/decoders.
- Apparatus according to claim 26 or 27 wherein the broadcast signal is 28. part of a subscription service and information relating to e-mail accounts is linked to information relating to the subscription service.
- Apparatus according to any of claims 24 to 28 wherein the notification 29. message comprises an identifier of the recipient of the e-mail.



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- 30. Apparatus according to any of claims 24 to 29 wherein the notification message comprises an identifier of the sender of the e-mail.
- 31. Apparatus according to any of claims 24 to 30 wherein the notification message comprises at least part of the text of the e-mail.
 - 32. Apparatus according to any of claims 24 to 31 further comprising means for storing preferences selected by the user.
 - Apparatus according to any of claims 24 to 32 wherein the apparatus is adapted to notify the user of a selected number of e-mails.
 - 34. Apparatus according to any of claims 24 to 33 wherein the broadcast signal is a digital data stream.
 - 35. Apparatus according to claim 34 wherein the apparatus is adapted to send the notification/message as a section of the digital data stream.
- 36. Apparatus according to claim 34 wherein the apparatus is adapted to send the notification message by way of an entitlement management message.
- 37. Apparatus according to any of claim 24 to 36 wherein the apparatus is adapted to send at least part of the e-mail in the broadcast signal.
- 38. Apparatus for transferring an e-mail from a mail centre to a user, comprising means for transmitting at least part of the e-mail in a broadcast signal.
- 39. Apparatus for notifying a user of the receipt of e-mail by a mail centre, which e-mail is to be transmitted to the user via a first medium, comprising means for transmitting a notification message, indicating the receipt of e-mail by the mail centre, to the user via a second medium, different from the first medium.
 - 40. Apparatus according to claim 39 wherein the first medium is a switched

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A receiver/decoder for receiving and/or decoding a broadcast signal, comprising means for receiving, together with a broadcast signal, a notification message for notifying a user of the receipt of e-mail by a mail centre.

A receiver/decoder according to claim 41 wherein the receiver/decoder 42. is adapted to compare an identifier in the notification message with an identifier which is stored at the receiver/decoder.

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A receiver/decoder according to claim 41 or 42 wherein the 43. receiver/decoder has a smartcard number and the identifier comprises at least part of the smartcard number.

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A receiver/decoder according to any of claims 41 to 43 wherein the 44. receiver/decoder generates a signal indicating the receipt of e-mail by the mail centre.

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A receiver/decoder according to any of claims 41 to 44 wherein the 45. receiver/decoder generates a signal for displaying at least part of the notification message.

A receiver/decoder for receiving and/or decoding a broadcast signal, 46. comprising means for receiving e-mail via a first medium and means for receiving a notification message, indicating the receipt of e-mail by the mail centre, via a second medium different from the first medium.

A receiver/decoder according to claim 46 wherein the first medium is 47. a switched medium and the second medium is a broadcast medium.

System/for notifying a user of the receipt of e-mail comprising apparatus .48. according to any of claims 24 to 40 and a receiver/decoder according to any of claims 41 to 47

49. A method substantially as described herein with reference to Figures 1-7 of the accompanying drawings.

50. Apparatus substantially as described herein with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.